



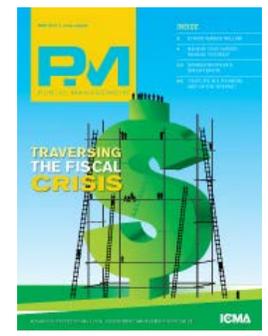
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Traversing the Fiscal Crisis: What We Can Learn from the Strategies of Local Governments with Aaa Bond Ratings

ICMA's 2009 "State of the Profession" survey indicated that local governments across a wide spectrum are suffering from the economic crisis, with impacts varying for a wide variety of reasons. Of significance are the different approaches used to deal with the downturn. Although the extent of fiscal stress varies by community as do the underlying causes, the authors of this article found clear differences between those with an Aaa bond rating and others in the steps taken to respond to fiscal challenges.
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Traversing the Fiscal Crisis: What We Can Learn from the Strategies of Local Governments with Aaa Bond Ratings

by **Evelina Moulder and Ron Carlee**

The January 15, 2010, headline in Bloomberg's news and data information said, "Municipal Market Handles Biggest Week of Bond Sales in a Month." During the past two years, volatility in the bond market and downgraded ratings for both the bond insurers and the bond issuers have had an impact on the municipal bond market. Although the majority of local governments responding to ICMA's 2009 "State of the Profession" survey indicated that the bond market had not affected them, what does the future hold?

ICMA's 2009 survey indicated that local governments across a wide spectrum are suffering from the economic crisis, with impacts varying for a wide variety of reasons. Of significance are the different approaches used to deal with the downturn. Local governments with Aaa bond ratings are managing the economic crisis differently from other local governments, survey data show.

This article examines the differences between the responding local governments with a Moody's Aaa bond rating and other respondents. Moody's has given Aaa ratings to 133 municipalities and counties, 45 of which responded to the "State of the Profession" survey. The responses of the 45 Aaa communities are compared with the 2,169 local governments that responded to the survey and do not have a Moody's Aaa rating.

As noted in Table 1, the 45 Aaa communities range from those with populations of a little more than 13,000 to two communities with populations of more than one million. The Aaa communities are located in 21 different states.

In this sample, higher percentages of Aaa-rated local governments report a moderate or significant impact from the economic crisis, but none of them reported

Table 1. Responding Local Governments with Moody's 2009 Aaa Bond Rating.

Local Government	State	Population
City of Beverly Hills	CA	33,784
City of Manhattan Beach	CA	33,852
City of Santa Monica	CA	84,084
Town of Avon	CT	15,832
Town of Darien	CT	19,607
Town of Fairfield	CT	57,340
City of Stamford	CT	117,083
Town of West Hartford	CT	60,110
City of Marco Island	FL	14,879
City of Weston	FL	49,286
City of Alpharetta	GA	34,854
County of Cobb	GA	607,751
County of Gwinnett	GA	588,448
City of Cedar Rapids	IA	120,758
Village of Deerfield	IL	18,420
City of Highland Park	IL	31,365

a severe impact (Figure 1). By comparison, 7 percent of non-Aaa communities reported a severe impact.

Paradoxically, only 5 percent of the Aaa communities reported minimal impact, compared with 18 percent of non-Aaa communities. Ten local governments, none of which are rated Aaa, reported that they experienced no impact from the crisis.

We do not, however, have sufficient data to suggest a correlation between bond ratings and severity of economic downturn. These results suggest opportunities for additional research to help distinguish the characteristics of communities that were severely impacted from those that were minimally impacted by the economic crisis.

Differences in size, location, economic base, social and educational composition, and many other variations make it impossible to recommend a generic response to an economic crisis. The impact often originates from outside sources. If, for example, a major employer is in a neighboring town and that employer shuts down, the impact will be felt in the nearby bedroom community where most of the employees live.

The impact might be seen in foreclosures, reduction in property tax revenue, decreased sales tax revenue, and other related revenue losses. Some localities didn't experience a huge housing bubble, so the number of upside-down mortgages and foreclosures might remain minimal and property tax revenue remains relatively stable.

Durham, North Carolina (population 226,800), is such an example, as Durham City Manager Tom Bonfield, ICMA-CM, describes it. Although the unemployment rate has doubled in Durham since the recession was declared in December 2007, it still is not as bad as it has been in other parts of the country. The largest employer in the city is Duke University and Heath System, and neither Duke nor other companies have had massive layoffs.

City of Lake Forest	IL	20,059
City of Naperville	IL	128,358
Village of Wilmette	IL	27,651
City of Overland Park	KS	149,080
Town of Lexington	MA	30,355
City of Newton	MA	83,829
County of Kent	MI	574,335
City of Edina	MN	47,425
County of Hennepin	MN	1,116,200
City of Plymouth	MN	65,894
County of Ramsey	MN	511,035
Town of Cary	NC	94,536
City of Durham	NC	226,800
Township of Berkeley Heights	NJ	13,407
Village of Scarsdale	NY	17,823
City of Dublin	OH	31,392
County of Franklin	OH	1,068,978
City of Upper Arlington	OH	33,686
City of Lake Oswego	OR	35,278
Township of Lower Merion	PA	59,850
County of Greenville	SC	379,616
City of Germantown	TN	37,348
City of Plano	TX	222,030
City of Salt Lake City	UT	181,743
County of Albemarle	VA	79,236
County of Arlington	VA	189,453
County of Fairfax	VA	1,040,000
County of Henrico	VA	262,300
County of Loudoun	VA	211,000

Aaa Governments Respond Differently to the Crisis

Although the extent of fiscal stress varies by community as do the underlying causes, we found clear differences between those with a Aaa bond rating and others in the steps taken to respond to fiscal challenges.

ICMA asked communities about the use of 16 different measures used to deal with the crisis (see Figure 2). Aaa communities used all but one of the measures at higher rates than non-Aaa communities. More than 50 percent of the Aaa communities used eight of the strategies while only three of the strategies were used by 50 percent or more of the non-Aaa communities. (Figure 2)

Also noteworthy are the strategies that local governments are using the least. Among these last-resort measures, there is more consistency between Aaa and non-Aaa communities.

Among the different measures, we found noteworthy the choices that local governments made regarding:

- Across-the-board versus targeted budget cuts.
- Reductions in personnel costs.
- Deferral of capital projects.
- Increases in fees.

Across-the-Board versus Targeted Budget Cuts

The ICMA survey results show that across-the-board cuts and targeted cuts were not mutually exclusive categories. Local governments could and do use both strategies. We found that Aaa local governments were much more likely to implement targeted cuts than across-the-board cuts: 84 percent used targeted cuts compared with only 18 percent that cut across the board. By comparison, only 53 percent of non-Aaa localities used targeted cuts; 31 percent used across-the-board cuts.

Across-the-board cuts are often rooted in a sense of fairness: every agency should contribute to the cause. Across-the-board cuts can also be a way to avoid tough decisions: targeted cuts require a serious discussion of community values, relative benefits of different services, and long-term implications.

After his recent meeting with Moody's, Manager Bonfield commented that long-range financial plans are essential.

While debt ratios and fund balances are considered by Moody's, Moody's also wants to see how local governments plan for and respond to financial challenges over the long term. Making targeted cuts can demonstrate a more strategic approach to managing the fiscal crisis.

Personnel Costs: The Main Budget Driver

Every manager is keenly aware that the largest budget driver for local government is the cost of personnel: salaries, health care, retirement benefits, and post-employment benefits. The preferred approach to reducing personnel costs has been to leave vacant positions unfilled.

This is the tactic used by most local governments but still with a distinction among Aaa communities and others. A full 93 percent of Aaa communities left vacancies unfilled compared with only 67 percent of non-Aaa communities. Still, no other measure was used by more non-Aaa communities.

Some localities have gone further by eliminating positions and laying off staff. In both cases, these more extreme measures are used by more Aaa communities than others (Table 2).

Another measure used by more than half (52 percent) of Aaa communities to reduce personnel costs has been to freeze pay; 44 percent of non-Aaa communities used this measure.

Although local governments appear comfortable with freezing income, very few have gone so far as to actually reduce pay. Only 11 percent of respondents have implemented furloughs or reduced hours, and only 7 percent have implemented salary reductions. There is no difference between Aaa communities and others in the reluctance to actually cut pay.

The approach used by the town of Lexington, Massachusetts (population 30,300), is typical. Town Manager Carl Valente, ICMA-CM, imposed a selective hiring freeze for both public safety and nonsafety positions. In most cases, vacant positions were left vacant for a minimum of six months, saving on both salary and benefits. In one instance, the town lost five public safety positions to retirements and provided a selective exemption to fill two of the vacancies because they affected critical patrol coverage.

Avoiding layoffs is a town priority, according to Valente, who regularly reinforces this decision with staff in a regular e-mail newsletter. When the public suggested that there should be more cuts in staffing, Valente explained that, unlike in the private sector, in local government demands for services increase during times of financial stress.

There is a noticeable increase in need for social services and libraries, which are a job search resource. In addition, the local government is a major employer. Increasing unemployment by laying off staff ripples through the community.

Richard Johnson, administrator of Hennepin County, Minnesota (population 1,116,200), implemented a hiring restriction that requires that a top management team review all hires. This applies to existing vacancies as well as to any new position. Through 2008 and 2009, the county was able to minimize the impact on the workforce by reducing the number of employees through attrition rather than layoffs.

In response to a sudden loss of state funding, employees were asked to voluntarily take up to 32 hours of leave without pay. Because it was voluntary, the union supported it and helped promote the option. As Johnson describes it, "The employees really stepped up to the plate." Sixty percent of the workforce accepted the voluntary furloughs for a total of 143,931 hours, saving the county \$4.7 million.

Durham laid off 26 employees and eliminated or did not fund 113 positions (5 percent of the workforce). It used targeted reductions that required prioritization of programs and the use of performance measures. Bonfield reports that the service impacts have been relatively minimal.

Weston, Florida (population 63,000), is an affluent community that operates with only nine employees to oversee all services, which are contracted out. This has been advantageous during the economic crisis, explains City Manager John Flint, because the city isn't burdened with pension and related benefits in the way that most local governments have been.

When the city contracts for services, it locks in costs with contracts for three to five years with annual adjustments indexed to the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U), which has recently meant that the cost of contracts has not increased. This strategy enables the city to know what its costs will be during a three-to-five-year period and avoid volatility.

Professional Development Declines

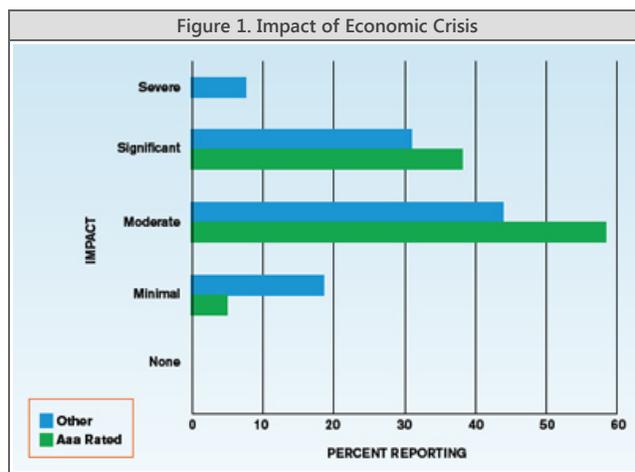


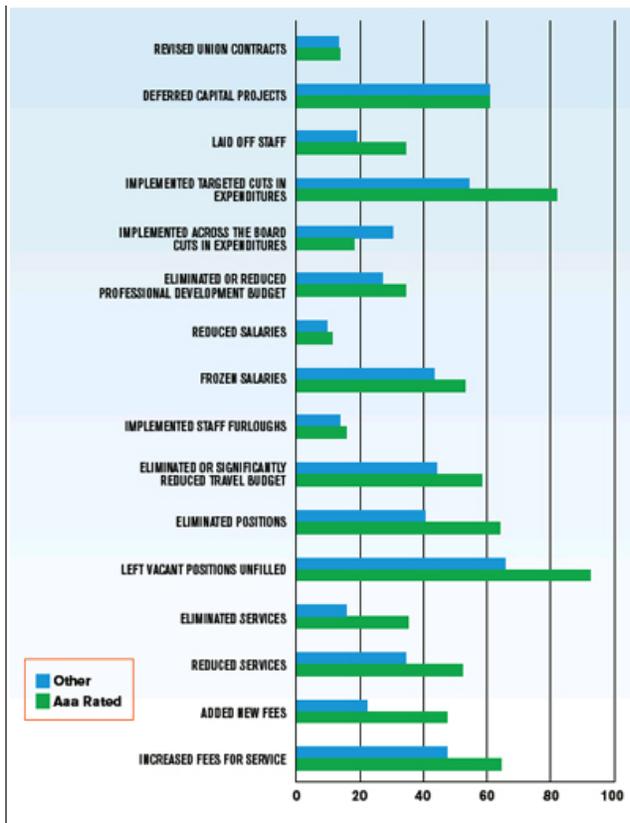
Figure 2. Measures Local Governments Have Taken to Address Fiscal Crisis

A troubling finding is the reduction in funding for professional development, including staff travel, a reduction measure used by 28 percent of localities. ICMA experienced this reality with its 2009 Annual Conference, as have other professional associations. There is no significant difference between Aaa and non-Aaa localities in the use of this measure. The question this measure raises is whether managers are providing themselves and their staffs with support and exposure to leading ideas as they struggle with the new economy. Are we at risk of being too inwardly focused?

Deferring Capital Expenditures

The same percentage (61 percent) of Aaa communities and others reported that they deferred capital expenditures to deal with the fiscal crisis (Figure 2). This could be a red flag. If communities are deferring discretionary projects that will increase future financial liabilities, this strategy makes sense. If, however, communities are deferring important maintenance projects that will result in higher future costs, the strategy could be short sighted.

Although the same percentage of both Aaa communities and others reported using this strategy, deferring capital was Aaa communities' fifth most frequently used measure while it was the second most frequently used measure by others. Are non-Aaa communities relying too heavily on deferring capital investments to meet their operational budget shortfalls?



The town of Lexington reports delaying "discretionary" capital projects, according to Valente, so it wouldn't incur debt and reduce budgetary flexibility in the short term. The town has not deferred such capital projects as energy efficiency projects that would produce cost savings.

Increasing Fees and Reducing Services

Another distinction of Aaa communities is their willingness to both increase fees and reduce services. Almost two-thirds of the Aaa communities increased fees (64 percent) and more than half reduced services (52 percent). Almost half of the Aaa communities (48 percent) implemented new fees. These three measures represent structural changes that can help close the budget gap for the long term.

By comparison, 17 percent fewer non-Aaa communities increased fees or reduced services; 25 percent fewer added new fees. As noted above, 26 percent fewer non-Aaa communities are freezing vacancies and 24 percent fewer are eliminating positions. These data suggest that Aaa communities are more willing to make tough, structural adjustments to the new economy.

Perspectives from Managers of Aaa Communities

Hennepin County's Johnson said that staff worked closely with the county board throughout the process of responding to the recession. He said that the close working relationship was effective in helping the board to recognize the breadth and depth of the problem, appreciate the rationale behind the initiatives the county had taken to respond, and understand the context for the budget recommendations.

Now, Johnson explained, the time has come to have the difficult discussion about "what not to do anymore." He sees the need for an examination of government roles. Who does what? Who should do what? Shared services also present new opportunities.

Valente explained that Lexington was better positioned to deal with the crisis because of strong reserves. The 2001 recession drained Lexington of its reserves, he said, resulting in Moody's placing the town on a watch list in 2004 and informing the town that its Aaa bond rating was at risk unless they made changes to the financial management.

When Valente was hired in 2005, one of his first responsibilities was to address the town's deteriorating financial situation. The town convened a blue-ribbon committee to examine finances across the board. One result was a requirement to build a reserve fund as part of each budget.

The reserve goal was 7 to 8 percent of revenues, which they estimated would be sufficient to cover the town through a typical economic downturn (three

	Aaa Communities	Other Communities
Eliminated Positions	64%	40%

years). Lexington had achieved a reserve balance of approximately 5.5 percent of gross revenues when the recession hit in late 2008. Valente believes the town can still withstand the next three years, fiscal years 2011–2013, without a significant impact on its services.

Layoffs	30%	19%
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Similarly, Weston, Florida, created significant cash reserves, including a credit reserve of almost \$7 million, which is 20 percent of general fund operating expenditures, during Florida's growth years. This reserve is in addition to a disaster reserve of more than \$39 million and a real estate rate stabilization fund of \$1.4 million.

In Summary

Data suggest that Aaa communities are taking a longer view and making the tougher decisions to adjust to the new economy. Rating agencies want to know that communities have a plan to deal with the fiscal crisis; they examine how local governments are situated for the long term. The measures used by more Aaa local governments than others suggest specific tactics for responding to the crisis:

- Make targeted cuts that actually reduce services and reduce the workforce.
- Freeze salaries (rather than use furloughs or reduce salaries).
- Implement new and increased fees to pay for the cost of government.

As difficult as it is, the financial crisis can provide opportunity. "You can make changes now that you could not make at any other time," remarks Hennepin County's Johnson, reflecting the progressive thinking of many of ICMA's members.

¹Moody's Financial Service was the only rating agency that would at no charge provide ICMA with a list of local governments that received an Aaa bond rating from Moody's in 2009.

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The authors thank Tom Bonfield, city manager, Durham, North Carolina; John Flint, city manager, Weston, Florida; Richard Johnson, county administrator, Hennepin County, Minnesota; and Carl Valente, town manager, Lexington, Massachusetts, for taking the time to be interviewed for this article.

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Aging Populations

by Clare Smith, Henry Tingle, and Joan Twiss

Large numbers of baby boomers will soon start receiving Social Security checks. In fact, some are already receiving them if they took early retirement or have a disability. This important demographic shift will create significant consequences—both good and bad—for local governments. What must local governments do today to get ready for this imminent demographic transition?

Numbers Are Dramatic

Eighty million boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will be retiring from full-time employment in the U.S. economy during the next two decades. This significant demographic shift should compel local governments across the United States to facilitate community-based planning and services in order to promote healthy and vital aging in their communities. The numbers are dramatic.

In 2006, there were an estimated 37 million older Americans representing more than 12 percent of the total population. During the next 20 years, the number of older adults will increase to 71.5 million and will represent nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population in 2030.

Why Plan for This Demographic Shift?

The aging of the baby-boomer generation will lead to both challenges and opportunities:

1. Escalating service demands. The aging boomer population will need and demand age-friendly services from local governments and their service partners. Aging boomers will expect an increase in affordable and accessible housing and transit, a walkable community environment, library and information hubs, and leisure and educational services—all of which come at a significant cost to local governments, educational agencies, special districts, and nonprofits. Because of boomers' numbers, education, and organizational expertise, institutions have always responded to their evolving needs as they have moved through the decades. This generation is a force to be reckoned with.
2. Smart growth land patterns. The aging of boomers and their needs will call into question spread-out suburban land use patterns. Most suburbs are not well designed for aging residents. The aging of boomers will undoubtedly accelerate the implementation of smart growth strategies and promote more compact, mixed-use, and transit-oriented developments.
3. Cost-effective health promotion efforts. As boomers age, it is anticipated that they will have more problems related to such conditions as obesity, diabetes, and arthritis. Without thoughtful housing and transit design, communities will experience a greater incidence of injuries sustained in the home and community, triggering increased use of costly emergency response as well as medical care.
4. Civic contributions. Boomers want to age in place. They enjoy their communities and homes. They have an existing social network that they value. Most significantly, they want to remain active and engaged. Most baby boomers are healthy and possess a rich array of skills, knowledge, expertise, and relationships. In addition to these resources, boomers who have moved into their next life phase have the time and energy to devote to community improvement and public service. If local governments and nonprofits intentionally and actively seek to engage baby boomers as part-time employees and volunteers, boomers will become an impetus for new social progress and community enrichment.
5. Economic benefits. Boomers include the richest age cohort in American society. If local governments and other institutions can provide the necessary support system so boomers can comfortably age in place, they will contribute to the economic well-being of the community—by buying goods and services; banking in local financial institutions; investing in local real estate or maintaining their investments; and supporting local charities, nonprofits, and the arts. Communities do not want to lose these boomer consumers and investors.

Community Planning to Promote Aging Well

A community-based planning process to prepare communities and regions for the baby-boomer transition should integrate a number of areas: housing, mobility and transportation, supportive services, employment, lifelong learning, and community engagement.

As they initiate planning for responding to their citizens' healthy aging, local governments should consider two primary issues:

1. Planning for healthy aging requires participation and commitment from all affected sectors. Local government can play major roles, including conversation starter, convener, and galvanizer of action. By facilitating a broad community-based planning process, local governments can avoid being identified as the sole responder to the needs and demands of the aging boomer population.
2. It is necessary to get started sooner rather than later. In the long run, being proactive will save the community significant human and financial resources.

Considerations in Engaging Boomers

In addition to involving its own departments, other public and nonprofit agencies, and business organizations in a vital aging and planning process, local governments must, of course, engage the boomers who are transitioning from full-time employment to their next life phase. As conversation starters, conveners, and facilitators of this planning process, local government leaders need to be mindful of several key considerations.

Select the right language. Traditional phrases like "senior citizen" and "elderly" are not terms with which boomers identify. In many cases, they reject these terms outright. In a survey conducted by the Journalists Exchange on Aging, professional journalists who cover aging issues concurred that the terms "elderly" and "senior citizens" are outdated. As alternatives, they suggested "boomers" and "midlife" adults.

The planning process, therefore, should avoid certain terms and incorporate language and images that better resonate with the boomer generation.

Understand what drives boomers. The events of the 1960s shaped many of the attitudes of the boomer generation. As a group, boomers tend to be idealistic and driven by causes. They believe that they can change the world if they unite their voices and efforts. They tend to be rule breakers. Boomers are the first generation in which a majority attended college. These days, many boomers must strike a balance between demanding work schedules and busy private lives that may include both children and their own aging parents.

Use variety of data-gathering and engagement approaches. To develop the best understanding of the emerging needs and the potential contributions of the boomer population, the community planning group should use several data-gathering tools. Resident surveys are valuable for assessing the needs and interests of a representative sample of older adults in the community. Focus groups are good tools for probing beneath the survey data and gaining a more qualitative understanding of wants, challenges, and opportunities.

Public forums assist the community planning group in identifying and testing recommendations for action as well as surfacing issues and concerns. In addition to their importance as data-gathering functions, these efforts also provide opportunities to identify and recruit additional participants and leaders to get involved in any follow-up action initiatives.

Focus on assets, not deficits. A growing population of boomers presents certain challenges. Local governments may tend to think of aging boomers as a high-risk or vulnerable group that is going to drain public and private resources. If this becomes the tone of a community's healthy aging initiative, it is likely to deter participation and frighten off important partners. Instead, it is better to focus on the numerous valuable assets that boomers bring to their communities, including time to devote to service and civic affairs, professional skills, advanced education and experience, and discretionary income.

Promising Practices

Across the nation, we are witnessing a wide array of efforts by local governments to promote healthy aging. Derived from a new resource, *Aging Well in Communities: A Toolkit for Planning, Engagement & Action*, published by the Center for Civic Partnerships, the two case examples below suggest promising practices for local governments interested in designing their communities and modifying their service portfolios to improve support of the aging boomer generation.

Case Example 1: Kirkland, Washington, "Human Service Partnerships"

Terms to Avoid	Terms to Use
Elderly, Seniors	Midlife adults, boomers
Old Age	Prime time, midlife
Retirement	Encore careers, next life phase, third age
Volunteering	Serving your community, civic engagement
Limitations	Adaptations

Checklist for Aging Well Planning Initiatives

- Have we defined the role of local government as convener and facilitator?
- Do we have a strong and inclusive planning committee that reflects our community? Are its members committed to a long-term planning process?
- Are there important agencies or associations we should engage as cosponsors of the process?
- Do our elected officials understand the

Kirkland, Washington (population 45,682), located 10 miles east of Seattle, was seeing an increase in its older adult population. After conducting an assessment of the needs of older adults, the Kirkland city council established in 2002 the Kirkland Senior Council, a multigenerational group committed to improving community life for older adults. The Senior Council is extremely active and has successfully implemented a number of special projects and campaigns, including:

- Falls prevention educational campaign.
- Healthy Living Expo for baby boomers.
- Campaign to recruit older adults into neighborhood associations.
- Efforts to encourage surrounding cities to establish their own senior councils.

In 2009, the council was faced with severe budget cuts. Instead of slashing human services for older adults, the council successfully engaged the neighboring cities of Bellevue, Redmond, Issaquah, and Mercer to jointly increase funding for human services by a total of \$5.7 million. This multijurisdictional decision led the local Evergreen Health Care system to contribute an additional \$60,000 in support of the Senior Council's Health Enhancement Program (HEP). HEP provides support in the management of chronic conditions, reduces isolation and loneliness, and incorporates positive activity into the daily lives of older adults.

Promising best practices for local governments include:

1. Establish a policy that the local government will take a leadership role in developing partnerships to support the aging community.
2. Invest in local human services to strengthen the public safety net, especially for aging residents who are vulnerable during a deep economic recession.
3. Take a multisectoral and cross-jurisdictional approach to developing and maintaining a network of health promotion and other support services for older adults.
4. Create and support council-appointed coalitions as a strategy for attracting business and charitable foundation funding for planning and services.

importance of aging well and that we are embarking on a long-term community process to create an environment that facilitates and supports aging well?

- Have we decided on the specific tools (for example, planning forum, surveys, focus groups) that we want to use, and in what sequence?
- Have we agreed on some common terms and an approach that will attract boomers and overcome their avoidance and denial of aging issues?
- Do we want or need to do any advance education to ensure participants have sufficient background knowledge to feel comfortable participating and to contribute effectively to various aging well planning events?
- Have we developed culturally competent strategies to engage members of our community's racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and other diverse groups to ensure that all voices are heard?
- Do we have a communications plan for sharing results and ongoing healthy aging planning actions with elected officials, governing boards, event participants, and the larger community?

Case Example 2: Citrus Heights, California, "Enhancing Walkability for Older Adults"

Incorporated in 1997, Citrus Heights (population 81,824) is located in the northeast portion of the Sacramento metropolitan area and has the highest population density in the region. Consistent with the city's history of inclusion and collaboration, Citrus Heights residents participated in drafting the general plan, identifying quality-of-life expectations, defining the city's vision and mission, and establishing priority areas to enhance quality of life.

During the past several years, the city has conducted a number of healthy community activities, including cleanup and beautification programs, leadership development, safety programs, and providing "grants for blocks" that involved 2,200 residents in improving their neighborhoods. More recently, Citrus Heights has created multigenerational community gardens as well as conducted walkability studies and neighborhood ride audits that informed planning for accessible routes to services for older adults. The city is also launching a Green Planning Academy for older adults.

City staff and councilmembers incorporated the identified needs and recommended priorities from the walkability study in the annual capital improvement project budget process. As a result, multiple sidewalk in-fills and street connection projects have been completed, creating safe walking environments for residents.

As a result of persistent efforts by elected officials and staff, Citrus Heights was recently awarded \$700,000 in Safe Routes to School federal funding that will provide sidewalk in-fill and intersection upgrades along a route that links a park on one end and a commercial center on the other, with the city's high school and an elementary school in between, to encourage walking and biking for people of all ages.

Promising best practices for local governments include:

1. Engage community residents and community groups at the start and build on relationships throughout the planning process.
2. Make education a priority by implementing outreach activities and communication plans designed to reach all community members.
3. Identify short-, medium-, and long-term measureable outcomes and share accomplishments with stakeholder partners and the broader community.
4. Develop meaningful leadership roles for community members as a method for increasing capacity and fostering community ownership.

Planning Tools and Resources

The Center for Civic Partnerships has a number of resources on its website at www.civicpartnerships.org, and it recently published *Aging Well in Communities: A Toolkit for Planning, Engagement, & Action* for local governments wishing to proactively promote aging well. The toolkit consists of the following elements that will be most effective when used in combination:

- Overview of planning for aging well in communities.
- Step-by-step guides for three important data-gathering activities.
- Case studies.
- Resources section.

ICMA also provides several smart growth resources to support healthy aging:

- Resource List: Sustainable Planning for Aging in Place (2006).
- Smart Growth Network Online at www.smartgrowth.org (2009).
- Active Living for Older Adults: Management Strategies for Healthy and Livable Communities (2003).

These resources are currently available from ICMA at www.icma.org.

Getting Started with Limited Resources

Even without an infusion of significant resources, local government leaders can take the following steps to get started in developing a community-based planning process:

1. Ask your city or county planning staff to do a simple demographic analysis of your community's older adult population.
2. Identify a lead staff person to begin conversations with potential partners about the need for a community-based planning process.
3. Convene an initial working group to begin the planning effort.
4. Use some sample data-gathering and engagement approaches (see sidebar) to identify needs, opportunities, and recommendations for all partners.

Plan Proactively or Not?

If local governments and their partners do not plan and organize for the baby-boomer retirement wave, they will witness greater service demands and usage, increased costs and resource deficits, lost opportunity, and turmoil as aging boomers demand accommodations of all kinds.

For those communities that do respond proactively, this demographic shift will provide great opportunities for social innovation, increased local investment, and community improvement and enrichment. The choice is ours.

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Providing Language Access Services in a Global Economy

by Anuj Gupta and David Torres

The nation's economic crisis is having a significant impact on demographic trends. Evidence suggests that the economy is slowing the national immigration growth rate and possibly causing reverse migrations to countries of origin. Nevertheless, historical data indicate that immigration trends are not affected in the long term by economic downturns, and prerecession demographic prognostications are likely to regain their relevancy as the economy recovers.

These predictions point toward the bulk of the U.S. population growth occurring through immigration during the next 40 years. A 2008 study by the Pew Research Center, for example, predicts that more than 80 percent of the country's population growth during the next half century will be due to immigration. The implication for local government managers and their communities is significant.

Local governments interested in staying in the forefront of changing demographics and meeting the needs of their diversifying constituents must figure out how to provide services to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals. A strong language access program can play a significant role in accelerating the integration of the newest Americans and, potentially, in encouraging population growth.

Building a high-caliber language access program has been a priority for the city of Philadelphia. During the past year, the city has taken steps to improve and expand language accessibility in an extremely difficult fiscal environment. This article describes improvements made in the language access program, results of these efforts, and steps that managers can consider in developing a similar program to deliver world-class local government services.

Establishing a Mandate

On August 11, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, which required recipients of federal funds to provide meaningful service access to LEP individuals. Although the federal executive order established a solid legal baseline by requiring language accessibility, implementation was still the sole responsibility of state and local governments.

Philadelphia took its first step toward local implementation by executing its own mandate in 2001. Philadelphia's executive order required city agencies to determine the resources necessary to provide meaningful access to federally funded city services and to develop language access plans.

Before this, the city provided language access services, but sparingly. An executive order in 2003 from the mayor also drove the inception of "Global Philadelphia"—the city's formalized language access program. To assist in the implementation of those plans, the 2003 order was followed in 2007 by a specific directive issued by the city's managing director, detailing the content that each agency's language access plan should contain.

The 2007 directive serves as a step-by-step blueprint for city agencies in creating their plans. It details (1) the citywide approach toward creating language access plans, (2) departmental responsibilities necessary toward plan completion, and (3) specific items that must be included in each plan.

Recognizing the import of the issue and wanting to expand Philadelphia's commitment to language accessibility, Mayor Michael Nutter signed a second executive order in June 2008. This executive order reinforced the previous one by mandating all city departments, agencies, boards, and commissions to develop language access plans and to assess and improve any existing plans regardless of whether they receive federal funding or are overseen by the managing director.

This significantly expanded the purview of the program by extending the mandate to several independent city agencies, some of which provided few to no language services. Collectively, these measures have set a tone that language access matters and departments need to pay attention to it in delivering services.

Measuring Progress and Maintaining Accountability

Establishing an executive mandate is just the first step. The mandate is useless unless managers are actively held accountable and their progress measured. Philadelphia's experience was a case in point. Although the first mayoral executive order was signed in 2001, in 2008 when the Nutter administration took office, incoming officials learned that a number of departments had either never drafted language access plans in accord with the executive order or had shelved what had been drafted.

To address this issue, staff decided to make language accessibility a subject that would be reviewed with regularity (currently quarterly) through two mechanisms: quarterly meetings with language access point persons from all city departments and Mayor Nutter's version of the CitiStat program, which is called PhillyStat.

Language access staff organize quarterly meetings with departmental language access point people who are called global ambassadors. These meetings are used to tell departments of any changes in the access program, stay abreast of departmental needs, and provide departments with technical assistance when necessary. These meetings are internal and are open only to those invited by the access staff to ensure open discussions.

The second tool for improving accountability is PhillyStat. The PhillyStat staff and language access team regularly identify three or four departments that are either laggards or are establishing best practices toward implementing their responsibilities. The goal of these sessions is to track, in a data-driven format, what departments are doing to provide language access and also to encourage cross-departmental collaboration.

Using PhillyStat to measure language access progress also allows the public and stakeholders to hold the administration accountable, as all PhillyStat sessions are open to the public, televised, and streamed across the Internet.

There are benefits to using PhillyStat to track language access. First, department heads now understand that language access is a priority and that efforts must be made to comply with the executive order. As evidence, the Philadelphia Water Revenue Bureau, which mails thousands of monthly water bills to account holders, recently updated its standard bill format to include a tagline in eight languages instructing customers that assistance is available.

Second, many departments that ignored or struggled with implementation of their access requirements have made progress as a result of the focus on their efforts. The Department of Recreation, for example, attended the first PhillyStat language access session and reported that not only had the department not provided language accessibility at any of its facilities but had irretrievably lost its access plan.

In less than a year since that session, the department has drafted a new plan, equipped 29 recreation facilities with telephonic interpretation access, and trained facility managers on how to provide children with translation service.

Finally, including language access in the PhillyStat review process has allowed departments to learn from one another and share best practices. The police department has received wide acclaim for a certified interpreter training program it has been administering for several years. This program allows bilingual officers to attain an industry-accepted level of interpreter proficiency that expands the department's capacity to serve LEP customers in the field.

After attending a PhillyStat language access session, the fire department committed to replicating the police program. For the first time, the city has certified bilingual interpreters within the fire department's ranks and is on course to certify nearly 80 additional interpreters.

A PhillyStat-like program is by no means the only method to ensure accountability and measure progress of a language access program. The method chosen, however, should ultimately set up regular reporting to the city's chief executive, the chief administrator, or someone in a similar position. Without this executive-level oversight, language access can often be overlooked, particularly in difficult fiscal times.

Establish Community Partnerships

In many places, community-based organizations stand on the front line in providing services to immigrants. Whether because of a deep-rooted mistrust of government originating in their homelands or the inability to properly access government services, recent immigrants often turn to community organizations to fill the void. In Philadelphia, such organizations as Community Legal Services, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, and the Pennsylvania Immigrant and Citizenship Coalition provide critical services, including job placement, health-care services, and legal representation to immigrant and ethnic communities. They are able to provide these services successfully in part because they have developed strong, trusting relationships with the communities served. Accordingly, leveraging these organizations, their knowledge of the immigrant communities, and their established relationships is an important ingredient toward building a successful access program.

These partnerships can take many forms. At a basic level, the local government should engage in ongoing dialogue with the relevant local organizations to better understand language access needs throughout the community. In Philadelphia, we began by inviting partner organizations to attend and observe our PhillyStat language access sessions.

This allowed organizations to better understand the city's deficiencies, strengths, and overall direction. It has also allowed the same groups to consistently provide constructive feedback and simultaneously act as champions of the change where improvements were made.

We also have invited the same organizations to attend the quarterly language access meetings held with department language access point persons. This provides another mechanism for sharing information with the community organizations, and it allows the organizations to stay abreast of initiatives in development.

In addition to maintaining an ongoing dialogue, language access managers should use the community organizations as focus groups to test new ideas. Philadelphia staff members have relied on partner groups to review the language of translated documents, provide feedback on cultural competency curricula, and determine the efficacy of such new initiatives as the city's language access cards.

The relationship cannot be a one-way street. In addition to ensuring that LEP customers can access services, a locality can also take steps to expand the capacity of community organizations to provide services. In Philadelphia, we used the purchasing power of government to negotiate new language access contracts that required selected vendors to provide city rates to any nonprofit organization headquartered in Philadelphia.

In some cases, this has reduced service fees for nonprofits by up to 75 percent. Not only has this initiative strengthened the relationship between the city and nonprofit organizations, but it has also expanded language accessibility throughout the city. Nonprofit directors have commented that they can provide their clients with appropriate language assistance without worrying about the additional cost.

Nearly every community will have organizations analogous to our partners. Managers should make overtures to these organizations and build relationships where they do not exist. The local government and LEP community will reap the benefits for years to come.

Make Language Access Visible

An access program works only if clients understand how to use it. The Philadelphia staff have made improving the visibility of program information a high priority. Increasing signage and placing it in areas of high foot traffic was one of the first steps taken. We started by placing telephonic access signs at all primary points of entry for the city's three central buildings, constituting the majority of city government office space (including city hall). Now, if an LEP customer enters any of the city's central office facilities, telephonic interpretation is available to help guide the customer to the desired destination or answer any other questions.

The city also created its first website (www.phila.gov/globalphiladelphia) for language access. It serves as a clearinghouse for basic information about the program, the interpretation and translation services provided, department language access plans, and contact information for the global ambassadors. The site includes contact information for nonprofit organizations serving immigrant and ethnic communities.

It also provides a welcome message from the mayor that is translated into five different languages and provides a translated tagline connecting LEP residents to the city's 311 nonemergency call center. In the future, the site will include a library of translated informational material that customers and providers can access from work or home.

Consistent with the goal of improving visibility, two best practices resources were developed: the Translation Station and the Language Access Card. The Translation Station is a desktop "point to your language" translation tool used during interactions with LEP customers and city staff. It provides basic written phrases to assist in identifying the purpose for the customer's visit and is translated into seven languages.

Translation Station was first developed by the Free Library of Philadelphia and has now been tailored to the department of licenses and inspections. It can be found at the department's counter service areas and has proven to be a great communication tool. In the future Translation Station will also be made available in other departments with counter service.

The Language Access Card is a multilingual customer service tool that a customer can present during an interaction at a city agency. It serves as a prompt and a reminder to staff of an individual's need for interpreter services and provides instruction on how to obtain interpreter services over the phone and at a city agency. These cards, commonly referred to as "I speak cards," are widely used in other communities and have been adapted to Philadelphia in five languages. Language access staff have leveraged their existing relationship with community organizations to distribute them. They are also made available at city facilities.

A new access resource called the Field Guide will be launched soon. Similar to Translation Station, this guide will be a pocket-sized "point to your language" translation tool to be used by staff during interactions with customers outside of city facilities. It will also provide basic written phrases to identify (1) an individual's spoken language, (2) who the city staff person is, (3) the purpose of the person's visit, and (4) several possible follow-up actions. The resource is currently being tailored specifically to the role of field inspectors.

These initiatives have helped increase usage rates of access services. Although much more work could be done if resources were infinite, these simple steps have expanded program awareness without requiring the dedication of additional resources.

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PM MAGAZINE

A Law Enforcement Sharing Story

by Jim Chrisinger

Sharing facilities and functions across jurisdictional lines sounds to outsiders like a no brainer. Why isn't there more of it? What makes it hard? What makes it work? Conversations with four of the principals who launched Coconino County and Flagstaff, Arizona's decade of success provide some insights.

By the late 1990s, the Flagstaff, Arizona, police department had outgrown its building. At the same time, the Coconino County sheriff's operation was contemplating new facilities. Arizona had mandated that sheriff departments manage jails, so cities got away from housing them, which meant that counties charged cities, including Flagstaff, for housing prisoners. As a result, cities and counties sometimes found themselves in conflict.

The Coconino County sheriff at that time, Joe Richards, recalls that there were lots of disputes about the ways that "prisoner days" were calculated for payment. It led to unhappiness on both sides. Richards was managing the local jail, and it wasn't all fun and games for him either. He didn't have enough space and had to move inmates elsewhere and pay these moving costs from his department's budget.

Richards was also dealing with long-standing lawsuits relating to the county jail. The jail was under court order, and prisoners were filing class actions, complaining of lack of exercise, poor nutrition, inadequate ventilation, and more. These lawsuits had tied up the county legislative system for years. Richards says he felt like he wore out several cars going back and forth to federal court in Phoenix. He also remembers thinking that something else had to be done.

So, the voters approved a jail district and a funding stream to go with it. But that raised the question of whether building a new jail but leaving the sheriff's administrative department in the old location was a good idea. New tax money could be used only for a jail, not administrative functions.

Solutions were needed. The city council and board of supervisors began talking about sharing one law enforcement building, including a jail. Some of the early conversations ranged even more broadly, beyond the police and sheriff to include pre-trial services, juvenile detention, probation, the juvenile court, courts, district attorney, and court administration.

It didn't go that far. Some of these entities were already remodeling their facilities or were satisfied with what they had. And getting enough land and money to colocate them all seemed too much.

Elected officials for the city and county swung in solidly behind a sharing initiative. In addition to facility needs, they also realized that communications and computers were antiquated. They knew that substantial funds would have to be spent, and they saw another opportunity to save money.

Officials approached the chief of police and sheriff with their idea. "No way," was the initial and unanimous response from both staffs. The spirit between police and sheriff was "us versus them" and "yours versus mine." Law enforcement sounded like gang territory, marked by turf, language, and even colors, in this case brown and blue.

Cathy Allen, then and still commander, administrative and support services for the sheriff's department, remembers,



Joint police-sheriff building, Flagstaff, Arizona.

"We fought it as hard as we could. We brought all our best arguments, the best our minds could muster." Flagstaff's police, for example, are paid more than county deputies, so people said they couldn't be put under the same roof, sitting side by side, with police officers making larger salaries.

The cultures of the two operations also are different. The police tend to be quick, reactive, even proactive; giving tickets and tolerating less nonsense. The sheriff's office tends toward more long-term problem solving, longer response times, efforts to solve the underlying problem, and looking beyond and taking the troublemaker off the street. There are different cultures and different expectations, both internally and from the community.

After listening to all these good objections, the county board and city council decided that it should be done anyway. At the time, the sheriff's department and the police department were housed three blocks apart, and staff members rarely talked with each other or even saw each other.

Prophetic in light of what would come, then chief of police J. T. McCann remembers that the board and council's unwavering commitment made it easier for everyone. The two organizations didn't have to sell the idea to themselves. Ultimately, the two sides agreed and then asked staff members to make it work.

Persistence and Patience

One thing working for the initiative from the start was the mutual respect and trust between Sheriff Richards and Chief McCann. They were already friends, but Richards remembers "that respect was the foundation. We were both willing to say, 'let's make it work.'"

Initially there were lots of questions and possibilities, many scary. Shared employees? People from different employers serving in the same function as dispatch? They hadn't gone there before. Employees learned from visiting other departments. Bob White, who was then the deputy chief, recalled: "We visited Huntsville, Alabama, where fire, police, and emergency response were all colocated in dispatch. We saw bad feelings created when some staff members were real busy but police and others sat around with their feet up. These differences are inherent in the nature of police and fire."

Then there was talk about creating a governing district, but that option was rejected. It just adds another layer.

After initially grumbling, some leaders and staff in both organizations began to see potential. Many services like communications, records, and warrants could be shared, and they could be done in shared facilities. Others picked up on the idea of a one-stop shop for the public. And 911 could be consolidated.

White also saw how technology could make it easier. The city was already tied in with Northern Arizona University (NAU) by shared computer, automated dispatch, and radio. So there was some experience with sharing.

Planning started two years out. Leadership established transition teams for every aspect. For example, sheriff and police each had their own codes for dispatch, called ten codes. Many codes overlapped but not all. Allen remembers the effort to get everyone on the same page. "It took some give and take. It was painful. Both sides said, 'We'll keep ours; you can just use ours.'" Believe it or not, these negotiations even extended to things like one-ply or two-ply toilet paper. "Everything had to be discussed."

There were other things: How many parking spaces? Who gets charged for what? One question that created lots of difficulty was "Who has the authority?" Most important, people immediately jumped to, "What will happen to me and my job? Do I want to work for *them*?"

One momentum builder was buying a shared computer system. Allen explains: "Once we were into that procurement, no one could take their toys and go home. We might have done that. We might have put a wall in the middle of the new building and quit. But once we were buying a computer system together, we were forced to go ahead."

But getting to the shared computer system was no piece of cake either. At first, the conversations were about "my data" and "your data." Then the talk moved to segregated data vs. all the data together. Allen describes what happened next: "We couldn't agree. We went back to the chief and sheriff for them to decide. They didn't decide. They said, 'Make it work.' So we did. We landed on data together."

Eventually, the teams arrived on sharing in five major areas, in addition to sharing a new building. For two services, dispatch and records, they decided that the city would take the lead, and the county would pay fees based on its use. The county would take the lead on three other services: IT (computers, telephone, and some radio); maintenance and custodial for facilities; and warrants for arrest, protection, and extradition. For these services, the city would pay fees per their use. Contracts document each of these five services. Joint oversight also continues for some services like records.

Which entity ended up with which services was a pragmatic decision; in each case, it simply made more sense for one to do it. The city had more business, records, and transactional activity, so it made sense for the police to take care of records. The county had more facilities, including the most square footage, so it made sense for the sheriff to be responsible for facilities. The city preferred that the county handle warrants because of liability issues. The county had the majority of IT users.

Rates and payments continue to be worked out. Most are calculated on a percentage basis—percentages of total transactions, calls for service, records, square feet maintained, and numbers of IT users. Still, some payments feel more fair than others. Some argue now, for example, that because the city has more funding for projects and therefore uses

more IT resources, the allocation doesn't feel quite right yet.

Most of the sharing agreements have been committed to paper, according to Allen, "as much as we can," by contracts or intergovernmental agreements. Still many handshake agreements have emerged because of immediate needs. Allen feels a bit of nervousness if someone leaves. "We know we need to get more on paper." But she adds, "As we enter into agreements, we want to be specific but also preserve flexibility."

After they committed and started joint venture activities, day-to-day operations found themselves "way ahead of the actual interagency agreements," McCann recalls. "We were doing it before the paperwork was done." The new facility did have to jump the usual hoops, for example, the political and neighborhood ramifications of siting a new facility. One concern: would it be too close to a school?

Different funding sources for different aspects of the facility also complicated things. They worked through them. McCann compliments the support staff who did a great job securing and managing grants; one example is the new software for dispatch.

One thing that helped the transition of dispatch from sheriff to the city was that the city gave arriving county staff members higher pay, often up to \$8,000 more, because the city's pay scales are generally higher. Pay differentials between operations employees still exist, and because of different funding mechanisms the county can't catch up.

Leadership found more ways to ease transitions. Employees could jump to the other jurisdiction and bring all their seniority, sick time, and vacation with them. Both jurisdictions were already on the same insurance plan, which also helped.

Because typical city pay was higher, employees didn't move the other way. One county person, however, said no to working for the city even though she would have received a \$10,000 raise. Many factors weighed in individual decisions, including family, friends, and even dating relationships.

Culture Change

The largest barriers were mistrust and suspicion—human nature—and the workplace cultures of both organizations. People kept wondering, "What am I going to lose?" They were not asking "What can I gain?" People pushed back with "Why are we doing this?" Just exploring the possibilities was perceived as criticism.

Bob White recalls that the tech part was easy, the human part was difficult. "In hindsight, I could have been more sensitive to people's feelings. Frankly, it's easier to just deal with the bad guys on the street," he said.

In the midst of this kind of change, the participants warn, watch out for blaming change. McCann notes, for example, that there were issues between operations and dispatch. "But that happens anyway. It happened here, but that's not because of the merger."

McCann remembers, "Initially, some just didn't want to do it, especially in lower ranks and in administration. They strongly felt the differences between the two organizations' philosophies and ways of working. We had to be persistent and keep up the effort to make it work. We had to keep meeting, assure people they would not lose their identity. There are still two organizations. We've stayed independent, but that was not the perception at the time. People were fearful. And now people say it's the best thing we ever did."

The former sheriff, Joe Richards, points out too that almost everywhere there are historical animosities based on old stories: back when "so and so did such and such to so and so." Those stories take on a life of their own and give the players in situations like this additional ammunition for why something won't work. Similarly, "local papers love to stir up controversy," Richards adds. "If they can paint winners and losers, they will. The dollars are an area where they will especially try to do this. So the two organizations have to honestly assess the dollars and efficiencies."

Allen recalls, "We did some things to foster familiarity and build trust. We held building-wide cookouts. We used some design features, like placing coffee machines and vending machines to force people to walk over to the 'other side.' We co-invited folks from both sides to the same training. We still take advantage of opportunities to promote interaction and strengthen relationships."

White observes, "It proved easier for transplants to town to ask the hard questions about why we need to keep all these entities. That's the nature of change. The longer you've been there, the worse it usually is."

To overcome these challenges, leadership and staff had to be direct. They had to say, "This is how it will be." Some employees tried to sabotage and later even admitted it. A few people did their best to be antagonistic. "Officers in the field know how to be nasty with dispatch," White remembers. "We worked through it with conversation, conversation, conversation."

McCann remembers that it took endless meetings: "People felt threatened by change. We listened and listened, meeting after meeting. At all levels, in all units. . . . Each level had its own concerns. So we needed good representatives from each level to get it done."

Neither jurisdiction brought in outside help to support change management. They did it themselves.

McCann also remembers that what made it work was everyone deciding to accomplish it. Staff had to get beyond the fear of losing identity. Once agreements were ironed out, lower-ranking troops got with the program. All four people interviewed for this article emphasized that it took many, many people in both organizations to make the sharing

work. And many did step up to do what was needed.

There was more to leadership's strategy. Leadership promised employees that it would do its best to avoid job losses. McCann is proud that layoffs were avoided. Anyone who was displaced got a comparable position somewhere else. Cuts were timed to avoid layoffs. Offers were made to people to change jobs, but no one was forced to change jobs.

In one case, someone didn't want to go to the other jurisdiction, and there was nothing available in the old department, so she ended up at city hall. No one lost a job; but some changed jobs. McCann emphasizes the importance of making some concessions as you do this. If there was a question of whether a position somewhere else was comparable, the benefit of the doubt was given. Credentials were accepted.

McCann also observes that change scares people, and some personalities were problematic. But everyone got better facilities and people appreciated that.

Payoff

The biggest benefit, beyond the joint building, was ending duplication in the merged services. In other cases, where the two entities had not had parallel units, they readily reached agreement on which entity would go forward with the unit both would employ. Thus, the county would handle search and rescue, the city the SWAT team. Some city employees joined search and rescue, just as some deputies joined the SWAT team. The two were not co-owned, but citizens got a better deal with the two.

Before the sharing arrangement, each side had called on the other's unit when needed. But each side had perceived that members of the other unit came only if they had time and it worked for them to come when called. Since colocating, the thought process has been different. Now there is more support for each other. The two jurisdictions also now form joint investigation teams. Another benefit, according to White, is that now there is real interoperability. Deputies can converse car to car with city officers and Arizona state highway patrol officers.

White also cited another benefit of technology system changes: success in the radio room. "We can now move quickly to a command post. It's seamless."

McCann cites "greater closeness, more harmony." The city was already conducting a citizens' police academy—a series of Thursday night classes and some Saturdays. That led to a joint academy with the sheriff as well as a program to train neighbors to be self-sufficient for 72 hours.

And the Cost Savings?

The Coconino-Flagstaff sharing venture clearly worked. It did what its instigators wanted it to do. But how much money did it save? No one really knows.

Initially, of course, there were substantial outlays. The county and city were replacing buildings and buying state-of-the-art equipment. But what would it have cost for both jurisdictions to build or upgrade facilities and purchase needed equipment? And to purchase land, which is expensive in Flagstaff? When the county purchased an old lumber mill property for the joint facility, that saved money.

Participants agree that there were also other savings and efficiencies. The county, for example, had a graveyard-shift dispatcher who was actually needed only 30 to 40 percent of the time. Now one graveyard dispatcher is shared. More broadly, both departments can supplement and fill staffing gaps for each other. They also take advantage of grant application opportunities by collaboration.

Other savings were achieved through economies of scale. Before sharing began, police radios needed upgrading. Dispatch was being modernized and upgraded. The sheriff's radios were antiquated. Joint acquisition saved money, reduced duplication, and everyone got better equipment. NAU's involvement meant that the city and county could use its 800 megahertz system, so the city and county didn't have to get their own. That also saved money.

After a decade, a few sources of tension still exist. City and county counterparts often sit and work in the same room. Police are still paid more, and some still ask, "How is that okay?" One might expect poaching of high performers by the city. But that seems not to happen. When asked why, Allen notes that "the jobs may be functionally similar, but they are also different. We still have different cultures and different expectations by the community." There are still issues to address each month, and these are taken up at colocation meetings.

Learning

What can be learned a decade later from this northern Arizona experiment of shared services?

- Start with committed leaders pursuing a shared vision. The city council, county board of supervisors, sheriff, and police chief were steadfast in pursuit of a shared vision. They kept their eyes on the greater good: better service and efficiency for the residents and taxpayers.
- Timing matters. Contiguous jurisdictions needing similar facilities and other expensive stuff at the same time boosts the impetus for sharing.
- Be prepared to overcome barriers. J. T. McCann notes: "Some said we couldn't mix blue and brown. Don't be so turf conscious. Lead with the mission. Local policies and procedures vary, but those are not what's most important."
- Find the win-win. "This won't work if one side feels like they're getting screwed," Richards advises. "You have to look honestly at the advantages and disadvantages. No surprises."
- Keep people front and center. Bob White notes: "Don't underestimate the human side. I did. Validate people's feelings. If you don't, nothing else you say will be heard."

When asked whether they would go back to the way things were before, the four principals are unanimous: no! What they have now is better, they agree, better for the people of Flagstaff and Coconino County and better for the sheriff and police.

But could it be undone? Since the sharing was initially completed, there has been a complete turnover: new chief, new sheriff, and new council. So far, no one has made noise about going back.

Reflecting on the transformational change he saw, White suggests that the increased pace of change in our society means that things like this may be easier to do in the future. "I train around the country these days," he notes. "There's a real generational difference. The new generation is more accustomed to change; they're more up with it. The hardest transition is for those who've been in their jobs the longest."

Cathy Allen sums up the experience: "This was the most challenging thing I've done in my career. It's also the thing I'm most proud of because of its benefits to the community."

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Ethics

Just because something is legal doesn't make it ethical

If a public official or employee is facing an allegation of unethical conduct, what's the standard response? "I've done nothing wrong. My conduct didn't violate the law." And chances are pretty good that even the most egregious conduct—even if it fails the smell test—is actually legal.

This is because our "ethics laws" tend not to be about ethics at all but rather about compliance with a set of narrowly drawn conflict-of-interest regulations that emphasize relationships and disclosure of financial matters. And, although many are based on the principle that public office is a public trust and government exists to serve the people, they don't actually require us to do so.

But, because these ethics laws are the definitive standard, they actually encourage some to work to the rule rather than do what is right. Let's face it. The gap between what the law requires of public officials and what the public expects in terms of honesty, transparency, and stewardship is as wide as the Grand Canyon.

Consider the impact the following legal conduct had on the public's faith and confidence in government:

At 2 a.m. and without public notice, input, or debate, the Pennsylvania state legislature approved pay increases for the state's legislators, judges, and executive staff. To their credit, Pennsylvania voters clearly and directly expressed their outrage at this act that so violated the ethical standards of transparency and open government. For the first time in the state's history, a Supreme Court judge was not returned to the bench, and other long-serving incumbents were also defeated.

In another example, a seasoned manager cited his deep roots in the community as an asset when he returned to his hometown to become the city manager. Several years into his tenure, rumors surfaced of his questionable personal relationships and investments. Just as the city was about to finalize a major land acquisition, the media disclosed that the manager had a personal business relationship with both the seller's agent and a principal in the seller's firm.

In addition, the manager vacationed with the principal, and they even owned a boat together. The manager acknowledged investing in partnerships and property purchases with a councilmember, the chair of the planning commission, and a developer in the community. When he was forced to resign, the manager blamed the media for creating an atmosphere of distrust and defended to the end his integrity as well as his friendships.

Yet another example: During an inquiry following the death of a resident, one of the paramedics revealed that she had bypassed the nearest hospital in favor of one near her home so that she could run a personal errand at the end of the call. The paramedics concluded that the patient was just drunk when in fact he had been mugged and was suffering from severe head trauma.

Lastly, a manager applied for the position of town manager in the community where he and his wife lived—and where his wife served as the chair of the town council! The chair announced that she would let the search committee members do their work and, if her husband was a finalist, she would recuse herself. When pressed to address what would happen if he got the position, the chair replied that state ethics officials saw no conflicts with one spouse being on the council and the other being the administrator. Of course, she would recuse herself from any discussions and votes on performance and pay.

The search process was contentious, with the search committee chair announcing at the outset that they would not entertain any candidates who had a conflict of interest. A town councilmember questioned the integrity of the process when the first round of candidates was tossed out, noting that there was the appearance that the husband was given a big edge. When two search processes failed to result in the selection of the husband, he cried foul and argued that he hadn't received equal and fair consideration because of this "perception of a conflict of interest."

The fact that state and local governments are adopting ethics laws and requiring mandatory training is not bad. This

approach at least frames the minimum standards and opens the door for the far more difficult discussions about why the conduct described above is unethical.

Mere adherence to the letter of the law alone isn't going to build the trust and confidence of those we serve. To gain trust, we must commit to a standard of conduct that is far higher. As public officials and employees, we must be honest, responsible with public resources, and remember that, first and foremost, our duty is to serve.

Last, we need the courage to challenge those in public service who are too blinded by ambition, emotion, or self-interest to understand the damage they do when they recklessly place their interests above those of the public. It's the Mt. Everest of challenges!

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Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

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Conserve Resources, Including Cash

Up to 30 percent of the energy used in typical commercial and industrial buildings is wasted. In a free webcast, ICMA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reveal how new energy-efficient equipment can save both money and resources—and how your local government can get funding for this technology.

- icma.org/energywebcast

Point, Shoot, & Share

Do you have outstanding photos of public works projects or unique local events? Post them on Flickr to help ICMA and the City-County Communications & Marketing Association promote the work of local governments.

- icma.org/photoassistance

Building Community through Sports

As part of a youth program in Afghanistan, ICMA organizes sports programs as one means of encouraging young people to engage with their communities. The program provides teams with shoes and clothing, playing fields, and equipment for volleyball, soccer, and cricket.

- icma.org/afghansports

A Handy Partnership

A home-repair handyperson is a money saver for people who can't replace smoke detector batteries or unclog drains on their own. The city of Roseville, California, has partnered with a local nonprofit organization to provide volunteers who perform these tasks for low-income senior citizens.

- icma.org/seniorhomerepairs

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Balancing Act

Your Life in a Fishbowl . . . and on the Internet

If I read all the vile stuff about me on the Internet, I'd never come to work. . . . If you're written about in a nasty way, it looms larger for you than for anyone else. Gossip goes in one ear and then out the other unless you're the subject. Then, nobody's skin is thick enough.

—Maureen Dowd, columnist for the New York Times, August 26, 2009

In blog posts or, perhaps more irritating, in the comment sections of local newspapers, a public manager can be chastised, ridiculed, or humiliated. Comments are not constrained by civility but instead are sometimes driven more by the desire to undermine or damage the manager. Now any kind of information is limited merely by whether or not a person decides to hit the "send" button.

Most troubling in this decline of civility are the personal issues (the extremely private matters) of the manager that may spill out. It is these issues that are distracting and that disrupt work and family balance. Private subjects that can become public include:

- Extramarital affairs.
- Troubled family members.
- Psychiatric treatment.
- Private personal interests.

Clearly, when such personal issues as these become public, they are extremely distracting to the manager. Many managers tell me that a sense of being on personal guard now extends beyond them to their spouses, children, and extended family as it never did before. When information does show up in cyberspace, there are many challenges. How this impacts balance is the focus of this column.

As the critical or slanderous information comes spilling into cyberspace, the manager undoubtedly recognizes numerous obstacles to being able to work and concentrate. In the same way these complications escalate at work, they also move out into the community.

The manager may encounter people at the post office, grocery store, or gas station who will know. This is not new. This is the proverbial life in the fishbowl. The Internet makes it worse; it spreads the news faster, further, and for longer. Anyone who knows the manager and comes in contact, through vacation, extended family, or other means, now could be aware.

Managing emotions is at the heart of keeping balance. The two emotions to be aware of are shame and anger. Privacy is important for keeping boundaries. When privacy is breached, there is also anger and the feeling of being attacked.

Being criticized is a form of an attack on your family. It is normal if it provokes anger. Shame comes when a person feels something is exposed that he or she would prefer to keep private. Shame and the resulting rage are extremely powerful.

SOME THINGS TO DO

First, *put the situation in perspective*. Putting things in perspective means not only the incident but also those who are preoccupied by it. Although it may be humiliating and you may feel everyone is looking, not everyone is. Most people have plenty of their own things to worry about, and many people know not to "cast the first stone." Remember, *not everyone cares*.

Second, *if someone was hurt, apologize*. Whether or not it was your fault, if someone was hurt by a revelation, it will

strengthen the relationship to apologize. Although doctors were facing lawsuits, the profession of medicine for decades was resistant to apologizing. When the situation was studied, it was determined that apologizing decreased the risk of lawsuits and strengthened the tie between patient and physician.

Third, *if you did something wrong, learn from it*. Some have described the experience of embarrassment and shame as the learning emotion. Shame appears to work to make us self-conscious. Listen and talk to those who know you well and will be tough enough to say what you may not have been hearing. It may be a gift that will help you keep balance in work and family for many more years.

Fourth, *if there is reason to confront and set boundaries, including pursuing legal means, do so*. Anger serves a protective function, and, as sportscaster Erin Andrews of ESPN has shown with her privacy case, criminals can be held accountable for what they do on the Internet.

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